

# Teen drivers often unsafe on the road with speeding and handheld cellphone use

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Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death in adolescents, and risky driving behaviors like speeding, rapid accelerations, and cellphone use can contribute to crashes. New research presented during the 2022

American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference & Exhibition finds many teens struggle to abide the rules of the road.

Authors of the abstract, "Using a Novel [cellphone](#) Telematic App to Measure Adolescent Driving Behaviors," found that all teens, no matter their sex, behind the wheel of a car were prone to risky behaviors, particularly handheld [cellphone use](#) and speeding. Among teen drivers studied, speeding occurred in approximately 40% of trips, and handheld phone use was detected in just over 30% of trips. In 5% of trips tracked by the study, teenagers were using a cellphone while speeding.

"Our data gives us another insight into teen driving behaviors. Teens were speeding and using their cellphone while driving, but it did not occur in every trip. We want to encourage safe driving and find ways to help prevent those risky driving behaviors that can lead to a crash," said lead author Catherine McDonald, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, Associate Professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing and Co-Director of the PENN Injury Science Center.

The researchers used a cellphone application to track the driving skills of 165 adolescents in Pennsylvania. The average age of [teens](#) in the study was 17.3 years, and the average length of licensure was 8 months. The study found that most adolescents drove short trips, an average of under 6 miles per trip, and less than 2% of trips were at night.

There were a couple differences between the driving habits of males and females. Hard braking and rapid accelerations occurred in only about 10% of trips, but males in the sample engaged in this risky driving behavior more often than females. However, there were no significant differences between the males and females in speeding, cellphone use, or nighttime driving.

"Given the rapidly changing technology in the daily life of adolescents,

this study also builds on previous research and helps to identify patterns related to cellphone use while driving among adolescents," Dr. McDonald said. "Behavioral variations in this sample highlight opportunities for targeted interventions on risky driving."

**More information:** Using a Novel Smartphone Telematic App to Measure Adolescent Driving Behaviors, 2022 American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference & Exhibition

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